

**Excerpts from *The Cuba Commission Report: A Hidden History of the Chinese in Cuba, The Original English-Language Text of 1876* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).**

The petition of the *hsiu-tsai* Hsien Tso-pang (洗左邦) and 14 others states, that “the foreigners of Macao sent out vicious Chinese in order to kidnap and decoy men and to place these in baracoons and on board of ships from which they cannot escape, chastise them there without restraint, and conveying them against their will to Havana, after removing their queues and changing their clothing, offer them for sale in the men-market. The *hsiu-tsai* Chen Shao-yen (陈少严) states in his petition: “I was decoyed here by wicked men.” The petition of Shih Chih-ho (施致和) and 28 others states, “we were decoyed from Macao to this Spanish island of Cuba.”... Again it was gathered from the 1176 depositions which have been recorded that of those who sailed from Macao Wen Chang-tai (文长泰) and 65 others were kidnapped, that Tseng-Erh-chi (曾二齐) and 689 others were decoyed, that Liu A-ju (刘阿瑞) and 50 others were entrapped into signing contracts in the belief that they were merely doing so in the place of others temporarily absent, that Huang A-mu (黄阿木) and 93 others were the victims of various snares tendered to them after they had gambled and lost, and that Chen A-chi (陈阿吉) and 65 others emigrated voluntarily... (pp. 36-7)

Of the more than 140,000 Chinese who sailed for Cuba, more than 16,000 died during the voyage... the petition of Li Chao-chun (李肇春) and 165 others states, “when, quitting Macao, we proceeded to sea, we were confined in the hold below; some were even shut up in bamboo cages, or chained to iron posts, and a few were indiscriminately selected and flogged as a means of intimidating all others; whilst we cannot estimate the deaths that, in all, took place, from sickness, blows, hunger, thirst, or from suicide by leaping into the sea.” The petition of Chiu Pi-shan (邱碧山) and 35 others states, “If the master be a good man the sufferings are only those produced by grave maladies, but if his disposition be cruel there is no limit to the ill-usage, and there have been cases when more than half the number on board have died. Ten thousands hardships have to be endured during the voyage of several months.”(p. 42)

The petition of Hsieh Shuang-chiu (谢双就) and 11 others states, “on landing, four or five foreigners on horseback, armed with whips, led us like a herd of cattle to the barracoon to be sold.” The petition of Chiu Pi-shan (邱碧山) and 34 others states, “Chinese (in the Havana baracoons) are treated like pigs and dogs, all the movements, even their meals, being watched, until, after the lapse of a few days, they are sold away.” The petition of Li Chao-chun (李肇春) and 165 others states, “at Havana, after a detention at the quarantine station our queues were cut, and we awaited in the men-market the inspection of a buyer, and the settlement of the price.” The petition of Yeh Fu-chun (叶福君) and 52 others states, “when offered for sale in the men-market we were divided into three classes—1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and were forced to remove all our clothes, so that our persons might be examined and the price fixed. This covered us with shame.” (pp. 47-8)

Wu A-chiang (伍阿祥) deposes also, “I myself have seen men flogged until they vomited blood, and death ensued a few days afterwards.” Li A-wu (李阿伍) deposes, “if on the sugar plantations the task assigned is executed at all slowly, the overseers at once inflicted several tens of blows, drawing blood, lacerating the skin, and causing inflamed swellings.” Chen te-cheng (陈得正) deposes, “if the work is not performed to the satisfaction of the administrator, imprisonment and working in chains are resorted to, or 20, 25, 50 or an indefinite number of blows are inflicted, causing the blood and flesh to trickle down.” Chu Chia-hsien (朱甲先) deposes, “the overseer said it did not matter if we died, as others could be bought to take our places.” (p. 50)

The petition of Chang Ting-chia (张定加) and 127 others states, “the daily food consisted of only maize and bananas. Our monthly wages, in the meantime, are only \$4 in paper, not equal to \$2 in China, and insufficient to procure us even the additional necessary supplies of food and clothing. It is thus impossible to save money.” The petition of Yang wan-sheng (杨万胜) states, “I had to labor night and day, suffered much

from cold and hunger, was flogged when seriously ill, and was chained and imprisoned even for resting a few moments.” The petition of Wang Hua (王华) and 16 others states, “we are allowed three meals a day, composed of sweet potatoes, maize, plantains and a piece of rotten salt beef, weighing 2 taels.” The petition of Li Ying-sung (李英松) states, “I had to work night and day, was fed on only potatoes and plantains, and was limited to a few instants of sleep.”... (p. 56)

The petition of Liu A-shou (刘阿寿) and 4 others declares, “after we had completed our eight years, our master refused to issue cedula, and desired us to work six more years. If we refused we were beaten and chained. Those who have no money to hire a *padrino*, who wish to go to other places of service, are exposed to be arrested by the guards and sent to the depot.” The petition of Chun Chi-hsun (朱冀训) and 10 others declares, “to procure from the officials a Letter of Domicile and a cedula an outlay of \$50 or \$60 and baptism and adoption by a foreigner were indispensable, so that it was useless for a poor man to endeavor to obtain these documents.” The petition of Li Ying-sung (李英松) declares, “on the termination of the agreement I was refused the necessary papers, and my master was even wrathful at my applying for them. I was delivered to the officials, who would not permit me to speak, and was confined in prison for six years, laboring but receiving no wages, a helpless victim of cruelty.” The petition of Yeh Fu-chun (叶福君) and 52 others declares, “when the completion of the eight years term was approaching, everyone was consoled at the prospect of speedy liberty, of saving money, and going back to China, but our employer was so heartless as to insist on our binding ourselves for other six years, sending those who refused to the depot, where they had to labor on the roads the whole day, with chained feet, receiving no wages, and not having enough to eat, whilst the severity of the toil was augmented by the burning sun.” (p. 74)

The petition of Wu Chin-cheng (吴锦成) and 123 others states, “we were decoyed to this island, where those of us who have not completed their eight years are subjected to much ill treatment, and the others, whose contracts have expired, are also the victims of wrongs. For example, when travelling by rail, we are not allowed on the better cars, and in the hotels and in the shops we are kept apart in the same manner as the black slaves.” The petition of Jen Shi-chen (任世贞) and 2 others states, “but though the officials, the merchants, and the planters are all indebted to us, they, with heartless cruelty, torment us daily and hourly, refuse to treat us as human beings, disposing of us as slaves and acting towards us as if we were brute beasts. We learn that friendly relations now exist between China and the greater powers of the West, and that it is by the efforts of the latter that the traffic in negro slaves has been suppressed. Why do they not render to us a similar service?” (p. 90)

Some years ago two Chinese having completed their term of contract, having obtained Letters of Domicile and Cedula, and having won prizes in a lottery, married Chinese women. They and their wives are still in the island, being unable to pay the cost of passage home.

Cheng A-lai (郑阿来), a native of Chaochow (潮州), the only man among the tens of thousands of Chinese who have landed in Cuba who is reputed to have amassed any considerable sum of money, married a white woman. He subsequently twice endeavored to leave the island, but was on each occasion arrested. He is now dead and no portion of what he possessed was remitted to China.

At present there is another by name Chang Chang-kuei (张长贵) who has married a white woman and who earns by his labor sufficient for his support. His disposition was taken and in it he states that he was disliked on account of his marriage, and speaks of the hatred entertained towards him for other reasons, and of the injury done to him by the *tipao* (Capitan de Partido).

Besides, a few others, by name Ho His (何锡), Chuang Wen-ming (庄文明), Wu A-ling (伍阿灵), Chen Husi (陈秀) Ho Tan-kuei (何丹桂) &c &c have married mulattoes and negresses. But the aggregate of these cases is very small. (p. 115)